

June 15 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

I want to thank Senator Kennedy and Senator Gregg for their bipartisan cooperation. I urge the conferees from the House and the Senate to act quickly on this legislation, so that America can say we put the reforms in place and we can truly say that no child in our country will be left behind.

I'm sure you've read about the so-called divisiveness in Washington. In short order, we have passed meaningful tax reform, and we are now on our way to meaningful education reform. And I'm so proud of the accomplishments not only of the administration but also of the United States Congress.

And I'm proud of your service to America, as well. You stand tall for a great country, and for that we are very grateful.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

Education Reform Legislation

Q. Mr. President, are you sorry you didn't get vouchers?

The President. I'm very pleased. It's a great piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 a.m. at Landvetter Airport. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland in Warsaw, Poland

June 15, 2001

President Kwasniewski. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, once again, I'd like to extend my words of welcome to all those attending the press conference. And I wish to express my joy upon the occasion of the official visit of the President of the United States of America, George Walker Bush, Jr., in Poland.

We are very honored that the first visit of the newly elected President of the United States of America is taking place in Poland. We take it as a symbol but, at the same time, as the confirmation of friendly and allied relations that Poland and the United States have enjoyed for more than 100 years and which have developed in the last decade very strongly, and that is a good reason for respect. I, once again, want to welcome Mr. President Bush here in Poland.

This transformation began in Poland over 12 years ago is successful. Also, thanks to our allies, to our friends, and also thanks to American politics—politicians, businessmen, all those who have supported us in

this uneasy work. We remember the visit of George Bush, Sr., President of the United States in 1989, when Poland was just starting its transformation. We are happy, Mr. President, that we can demonstrate a better and changed democratic Poland to you, the Poland that is using its political opportunity.

During our talks, we discussed the international border, and I wish to accept the determination on the part of the United States towards the enlargement of NATO. We're happy to say that we have similar views over the political situation and political relations in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States has been very supportive of Poland's aspirations as a future member of the European Union.

We're very close not only in the political sense, but in everyday cooperation we have been very close, as well. We have adopted the common resolution of the President of the Republic of Poland and the President of the United States of America. You've been distributed this important document

because it refers to all important, most important issues and, at the same time, it has been written in a very legible and understandable language to everyone. In our joint resolution, there is nothing that relates to diplomacy, but there is only the substance of our very close, friendly, and allied relations.

This is what I wanted to say by introduction and welcome you, Mr. President, once again.

President Bush. Thank you for the beautiful weather.

President Kwasniewski. We have special relations. [Laughter]

President Bush. I'll try to highlight that in my speech this afternoon.

I'm the third President to come to your beautiful land since Poland regained freedom. Many more will follow, because the bond between our two countries is very strong, and that bond is formed of many things, starting with our love for freedom.

Over the last generation, the people of Poland have suffered greatly to win freedom. America stood with Poland in that struggle, and we stand with you today in facing the challenges of a new era of democracy and economic progress.

Our hopes for peace for Poland and all of Europe depend on NATO. Since joining the Alliance 2 years ago, Poland has contributed greatly to its success and serves as a fine example for all future members of NATO. The President and I talked about how NATO must continue to enlarge, to increase Europe's security. We talked about the challenges and opportunity NATO faces in its relations with Russia and with neighbors in transition, like the Ukraine.

Today, U.S. and Polish soldiers serve side by side as part of the NATO contingent that seeks to bring peace and democracy to the Balkans. It's important that Poland's military remain well-equipped. To that end, I'm pleased to announce the United States is making the necessary legislative preparations to transfer a second frigate to the Polish Navy.

The President and I also discussed Poland's move toward membership in the European Union. The EU is America's largest trading partner outside North America. Joining Poland's economy to that of the EU is in all our interests and will only strengthen America's ties with all our Atlantic partners.

The interests of America and Poland are clear, and they are the same: To continue building a more stable Europe; to strengthen the institutions of democracy, freedom, commerce, and mutual security; and to promote the prosperity that comes through investment and open trade.

Another topic we covered today was the common commitment of the United States and Poland to spreading prosperity and democracy in this part of the world. And I was pleased to inform the President that the Polish American Enterprise Fund will transfer \$20 million to the new Polish-American Freedom Foundation. In this way, our countries can continue the joint work of promoting democracy and free markets and the rule of law throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

I look forward to my meeting, as well, with the Prime Minister. I look forward to conveying my respect to him for his role in helping bring Poland into NATO. Friendship and cooperation between our two countries is strong and is growing stronger. The Republic of Poland today is an equal partner in the work of building greater prosperity and security across Europe, and it's a huge honor for me to be here.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Kwasniewski. Thank you, Mr. President. Now is time for questions.

NATO Expansion

Q. In accordance with the Brussels decision yesterday, in one year's time there will be further candidates in Europe to negotiate their membership. Will that one year be a sufficient period of time, and will one of the criteria be for NATO membership

so that NATO could constitute a wholeness, a whole area, in political terms?

President Bush. If I understand the question correctly, it was about NATO expansion.

Q. Yes.

President Bush. My Government believes NATO should expand. We believe no one should be excluded because of history or location or geography. And we don't believe any nation should have a veto over who is accepted. We also believe a lot of progress has been made toward achieving the requirements necessary to be accepted into NATO and look forward to the Prague summit a year from this fall, to a positive statement of expansion. I think it will happen; to the extent, we will see. How many nations are accepted, we will see. But in my speech today I will say, it's not a matter of whether NATO expands; it's a matter of when NATO expands. We strongly stand on the side of expansion of NATO.

Major Garrett [Cable News Network].

Russia

Q. President Kwasniewski, thank you for your hospitality. President Bush, there are fresh reports today about concerns of the U.S. Government of proliferation from the Russian Government, selling certain materials to nations such as Iran. And before we left on this trip, your National Security Adviser expressed some doubts about President Putin's commitment to democracy. I'm curious, sir: What is your general assessment of Russia on these two vital questions, proliferation and its commitment to democracy? Thank you, sir.

President Bush. As you know full well, I've got a meeting with President Putin tomorrow. And I am really looking forward to it because it's an opportunity for me to say to President Putin, the United States is no longer your enemy.

I also will stress that my vision of Europe includes Russia and that Russia should not fear the expansion of freedom-loving people to her borders. Russia has got vast potential

and great opportunity, particularly if she makes a commitment to democratic institutions and to the rule of law and embraces the open market.

I am concerned about some reports of the proliferation of weapons throughout—on Russia's southern border, for example, countries on her southern border, and I'll bring that subject up. I think it's important for Russia to hear that our Nation is concerned about the spreading of weapons of mass destruction. And I'll bring it up in the context of explaining why it is important for us think differently about missile defenses, to think differently about the cold war doctrine that is codified in the ABM Treaty of 1972. The more capacity a nation has to develop a—a nation that can't stand America or our friends or Allies—to develop weapons of mass destruction, the more necessary it is for freedom-loving people to have the capacity to halt any political blackmail they may choose to inflict upon us.

And so I will talk about democracy—democracy building. I'll talk about capital investment and the need for capital to have open markets and rule of law, transparency in economy, and I will also talk about security measures.

U.S. Visas for Polish Visitors

Q. This is a question to Mr. Bush—[inaudible]—to Poland, as a symbol of our openness and our sympathy for the U.S. Unfortunately, this gesture is not returned. I'd like to ask you, may Poles count on not needing American visas soon? Thank you.

President Bush. American visas?

Q. Yes. Yes, sir.

President Bush. In other words, whether or not someone going to America needs a visa?

Q. Yes, sir.

President Bush. We can discuss that issue at the State Department level. But Poles are welcome in America. We welcome you to come. There are, as you know—Chicago

is a city with many, many people of Polish heritage. I would hope that it's easy to travel to our country.

David Gregory [NBC News].

Q. Mr. President, good afternoon.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. You look mighty sharp today, by the way.

Q. Well, thank you very much.

President Bush. Don't you think? [Laughter]

Russia

Q. I wonder if you would be specific, sir, about what incentives you're prepared to offer Russian President Putin to get both his blessing and perhaps his cooperation in missile defense. And additionally, as you just mentioned, you no longer consider Russia an adversary. Then what is it? What do you want Russia to become—an ally, a strategic partner, a strategic adversary, what?

President Bush. My hopes are the same as the President's hopes about Russia. We want Russia to be a partner and an ally—a partner in peace, a partner in democracy, a country that embraces freedom, a country that enhances the security of Europe.

The discussion tomorrow, David, is going to be a broad discussion. It won't focus just on defenses, security arrangements. It will focus on a frame of mind and an attitude. This is my first meeting with the President, and certainly won't be my last. The purpose of the meeting is to share a vision about Russia's role in the world and in Europe. It is to assure—it is to provide assurances to Russia that our country doesn't want to diminish the nation; we want to help elevate the nation. We will have a long discussion about the role of capital in a society, that if Russia makes the right choices, she will attract a lot of capital, U.S. capital. Russia has got enormous resources and great potential.

This is the first of what I hope are many meetings between Mr. Putin and me, and many discussions. And first and foremost is to develop a trust between us. He doesn't

know me, and I don't know him very well. But at my press conference tomorrow, I am confident I will be able to say I've got a pretty good feel for the man, and he's got a good feel for me. And he'll see that I'm the President of a peace-loving nation, a nation that wants Russia to succeed and do well. The definition of the relationship will evolve over time, but first and foremost, it's got to start with the simple word "friend."

National Missile Defense

Q. The first question to President Kwasniewski: I am intrigued whether you used the opportunity during your talks with the President, and have you asked the question about the missile defense? Have you talked also about Brussels, and have you developed that subject, or have you rather concentrated on bilateral relations and—in connection between Russia and NATO and good relations between NATO and Russia—and of course, in future relations in the world?

President Kwasniewski. When it comes to the missile defense system, following the presentation of President Bush's opinion in Brussels, the case seems very clear. The United States wishes to build this system, not exclusively safeguarding its own interests but to reinforce a general world security. And the United States wants to do some more research and enter dialog with all partners, both in NATO as well as in—with Russia and other partners about that issue.

And I think this is a very rightful and a very appropriate position. And if we're going to work along these lines, it may turn out that the new security systems are not controversial at all and that they would not constitute any problems for us but would, rather, reinforce our feeling of security. It goes beyond any doubt that the cold war is over and that today we do not have such enemies that we used to have in the past and that it is possible to cooperate with

every democratically organized state in the world.

We're convinced that if reaching these decisions could be—if these decisions could be achieved through a dialog and the search for opinions in the form of a dialog, then certainly we will achieve mutual understanding.

And this is how I understood President Bush's presentation in Brussels. And I think that President Bush's presentation actually took away all those fears that were connected with this position. I think this is a very reasonable, very appropriate attitude on the part of the United States of America. Star Wars was an idea that matched the ideological confrontation. Today we're talking about global security, and these are completely two different animals.

President Bush. I appreciate what the President said in the meeting that went on in Brussels, and he's right. There was receptivity to a new way of thinking about the ABM Treaty. And I was very pleased to see how forward-leaning many nations were during our discussion. There are a lot of leaders who understand that the old cold war mentality is not necessary anymore, that it's time to set a new strategic framework for the peace of Europe and peace for the world. I don't know what the press reports are like, but I can assure you, inside the meeting there was a receptivity that was very warm and for which I was very grateful, and the President just reflected that.

Secondly, Poland serves as an example of what's possible. One of the reasons I came here was to be with my friend, but I also came here to show nations that are hungry for democracy or striving for democracy or looking at democracy what's possible. And Poland serves as a bridge and an important example. If you believe in a Europe whole and free and secure, a good place to make that case is right here.

And so, you bet, we talked about Poland's important role, and it's an incredibly important role. We spent time talking about

the Ukraine, as well. Poland has played, thanks to the President's leadership, a very important role in the Ukraine. The Ukraine is a country in transition, and Poland and the United States and other nations in Europe must work with the Ukraine to help Ukraine make the right decisions and right choices for the future. And those decisions are freedom and democracy and open markets, the very same values embraced by Ukraine's neighbor Poland. I'm proud of the accomplishments of the President, and proud of the accomplishments of this great people.

Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

*General Electric-Honeywell Merger/
National Missile Defense*

Q. The Europeans have never rejected a merger between a U.S. and European company, but they're set to reject a deal between GE and Honeywell, the largest merger ever. In your talks this week, has your administration raised the issue? And if the deal is rejected, what would that do for U.S.-European relations?

And Mr. Kwasniewski, how deep is Poland's support for the President's missile defense deal, and do you have reservations about it? Thank you.

President Kwasniewski. Well, I explained our position in last question. When we will discuss not about MD system in sense of American security and some technical concept, but we'll see it is necessary to create effective security system for new world, for global world after World War II and after cold war. So I think we can discuss many details, and we can support such concept.

I repeat again what President Bush said in Brussels. I understood American approach to this question as a very open, very full of wish of dialog. And—in speech and statement of President Bush in Brussels, it was a concept not for the United States; it was a concept for all of us and a concept which is absolutely different than everything what we had during cold war. That

is not the repetition of Stars War again. That is a new idea how to create better system for security, which can be for disposal of all of us, of NATO countries and all countries, including Russia and then China. So I think this approach is extremely interesting and is necessary to continue this dialog.

President Bush. We have brought up the proposed merger at the appropriate levels during this trip and before the trip. Our Government looked at the merger and approved it. The Canadian Government looked at the merger and approved it, and I am concerned that the Europeans have rejected it. That's all I've got to say on it.

Thank you, all.

President Kwasniewski. We have—no questions more? One. You know, this is a souvenir for Poland. One question more, please.

President Bush. All you're trying to do is butter up to your press corps. [Laughter]

Q. A question to President Kwasniewski: Would you be so kind as to mention what is included in the joint declaration? We received it in the English version. Do you know if there's any Polish joke?

President Kwasniewski. That is the main mistake of the politician, to give chance for next question. [Laughter]

Thank you very much for your attention. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:40 p.m. in the Presidential Palace. President Kwasniewski spoke in Polish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek of Poland and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A portion of this news conference could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Aleksander Kwasniewski *June 15, 2001*

President George W. Bush and President Aleksander Kwasniewski affirm the deep friendship that exists between the United States and Poland, based on our common commitment to democratic values and our common resolve to build a stronger Transatlantic alliance and a 21st century Europe whole, free, and at peace. For more than ten years Poland and the United States have worked together to advance and maintain democracy in Europe. This is made possible by the existence of an independent Poland, a vision for years nurtured by Poles who, among the first of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, initiated a successful march to freedom. The friendship of the two countries is deeply rooted in a common tradition of striving towards freedom, a goal fostered for generations by

Americans of Polish descent who, while contributing to the success of the United States, never forgot the country of their ancestors.

We affirm that NATO will remain the essential foundation of Transatlantic security. We will work together and with our other NATO Allies to adapt NATO to new missions and new challenges, by strengthening its capabilities; admitting to our ranks European democracies prepared to assume the responsibilities of membership; and extending cooperation with Ukraine, Russia, and other members of the Partnership for Peace. Poland's entry into NATO in 1999 marked a milestone in its return to the Transatlantic community and increased Europe's security overall. NATO's continuing enlargement will allow new Allies to join